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## REVIEWS

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*Democracy in Reconstruction.* Edited by FREDERICK A. CLEVELAND (formerly Chairman of President Taft's Commission on Economy and Efficiency) and JOSEPH SCHAFER (Professor of History in the University of Oregon and Vice-Chairman of the National Board for Historical Service). Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1919. \$2.50.

Within this volume of about 500 pages have been assembled twenty-three essays by about twenty writers, each man a specialist in his field. The range is extensive: Ideals of Democracy; Institutions of Democracy; After-War Social Problems; After-War Labor Problems; After-War Transportation Problems; and After-War Political Problems. Some of the papers are delightfully concrete; such as "Motorized Highways, the Basis of a National Transport System"; and "Ocean Commerce in War and Reconstruction." The compact yet very informative historical approaches to current problems in many of the chapters seem especially worthy of commendation.

To the man who cannot read exhaustively the literature of these current problems this book can be cordially recommended. Its topics correlate well with topics discussed in the best contemporary journals; and the essays are nearly all done in a lively and readable style.

Looked at from the standpoint of the needs of our time, the present reviewer experiences a sense of disappointment with the book in two respects—disappointment, that is, of expectations raised by the high standing of the editors and contributors and by the obviously ambitious purposes of the book itself.

It is one thing to analyze very clearly the historical conditions which lead up to current problems and then clearly to state these problems themselves; and quite another to come to close grips with them and with warriorlike earnestness attempt their solution. Have our leading thinkers become so habituated to the judicial attitude required in classrooms and in the chairs of commissions that they dare *never* let themselves become passionately partisan even as regards big ideas? Are we Americans not leaving intense and biting utterance too much to men of little minds and mean spirits?

So many of these essays seem cautiously inconclusive. Many of us could wish that the writer, succeeding his cool, sparring analysis, would have taken off his coat and fought a few rounds in Rooseveltian fashion for the cause—or at least *a* cause. Surely most of the writers of these essays were *able* to do this; and certainly they could have done so with sufficient recorded reservations to prevent any impairment of their general reputations for scientific dispassionateness.

Possibly the reviewer's second criticism will seem a bit inconsistent with the above; but it really is not. Scattered through several of the essays are a number of generalizations that have become current coin in the service of social propaganda, but which are certainly of doubtful mintage. Our six million adult illiterates—can we not sanely analyze their real social significance instead of using them as the ever handy stick with which to beat any kind of dog? "Now political or industrial democracy resting on a bare average of a sixth grade education is unthinkable or at best a forlorn hope of stagnant mediocrity." Much error and perhaps some truth are involved in this easy generalization. It certainly pays little tribute to many noteworthy historic facts—Athens, republican Rome, the guild cities, early Massachusetts.

"Sixty per cent of all the wealth of the United States is owned by two percent of our people." Is it not time to give this alleged fact further evaluative or interpretative analysis? As a people are we poor? Poorer than our forefathers were in 1870, 1770, 1670, 1470, 1270? Or than the people of Italy, India, or Japan today? Why can a penniless but healthy adult going to Montana today be assured of a comfortable livelihood, whereas one hundred years ago his existence would have been most precarious? Eighty per cent of our immigrants are a living refutation of the conclusion that "in America extravagance has been epidemic and that the price of our folly is dependency." It is not that the writers' conclusions are wrong; they may be right, but in most cases they are not presented in the light of comparable standards—they are fractions, of which only numerators are given. What every citizen wants first of all to know is, Are we going forward, or backward?

Perhaps the editors can be persuaded to give us a second book frankly devoted to advocacy of particular solutions of some of the problems they have raised—designed, as much as anything else, to show methods by which they should be attacked scientifically and with resoluteness of spirit.

DAVID SNEDDEN